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WHISTLING BOY

FRANK DUVENECK

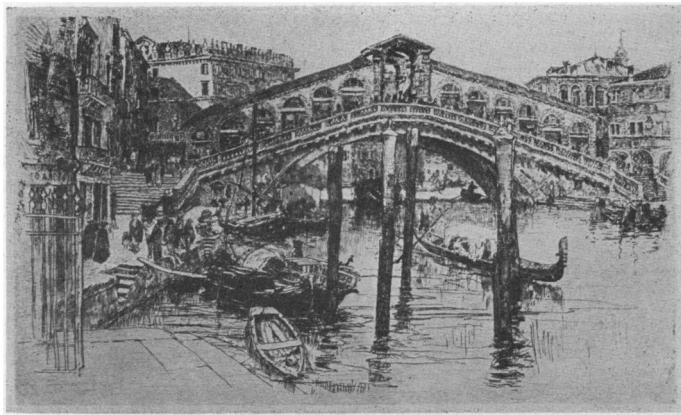
THE CINCINNATI ART MUSEUM

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AN ETCHING

FRANK DUVENECK

## FRANK DUVENECK: ARTIST AND TEACHER

BY ANNA SEATON-SCHMIDT

**T**HREE are many splendid painters in America, but few possess the power of transmitting their knowledge to students. Men of genius in every branch of art are notably the poorest teachers; it seems impossible for them to communicate to others the technique which has helped them to produce their masterpieces. That is one reason why work in the great schools of Paris became so stilted and perfunctory; they possessed no geniuses in the way of masters. True, many of their famous painters and sculptors were generous enough to give their services to the schools for the sake of the students—never for money, as they received none—but they rarely had the gift for teaching that has distinguished Frank Duveneck. Even as a student he had the happy faculty of clarifying for others the difficult problems which he had just conquered. When he became a teacher in Munich his classes were so popular that they had to be divided into those admitting English and Americans, and those which received only foreign-

ers; and when having absorbed all that he thought of value for his own work in Germany, he decided to go to Florence and study the Italian masters, half of his pupils immediately announced their intention of following him in order to continue their lessons. Among these were John Alexander, Joseph Decamp, John Twachtman, Ross Turner, and many other now famous painters.

“Teachers are born, not made,” yet there are many American artists of our time who have profited by the very unusual ability of Mr. Duveneck to assist them in gaining their technique without influencing their individual style. There is nothing didactic in his teaching—he opens the eyes of his pupils and helps them “truly to see,” which Rodin insists is the one thing needful. He then goes a step farther—enkindles their imagination and awakens their enthusiasm so that they are willing to slave and delve even as he has done since the age when most boys expend their energy on marbles, baseball or football.

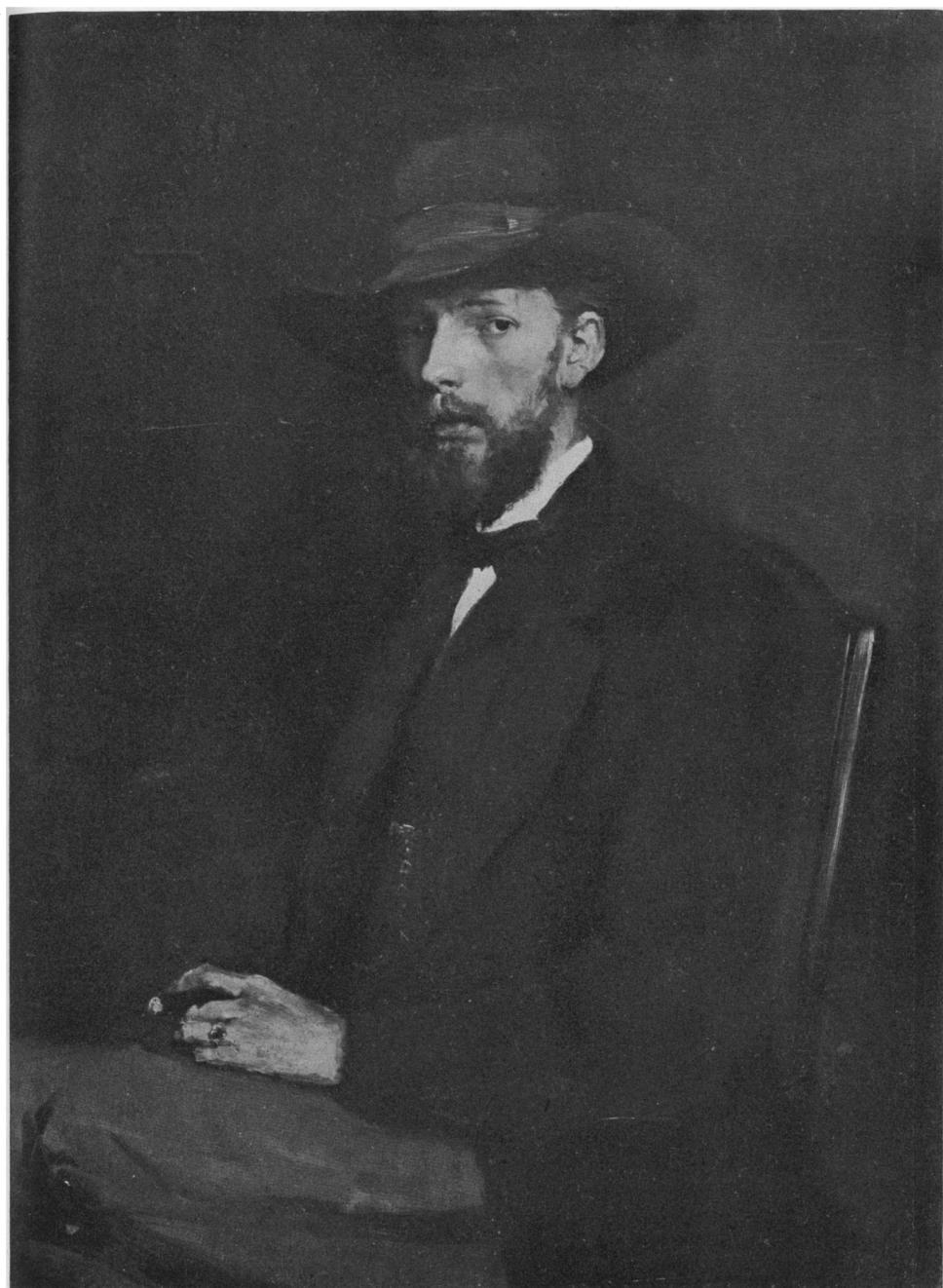
Born in 1848, before Cincinnati had even conceived the possibility of an Art School, Duveneck haunted the workshops of church builders, eagerly assisting the men who carved the altars or frescoed the walls. When about eighteen a German church decorator, named Lamprecht, came to Cincinnati and engaged him as an assistant. He regards this period as very important in his artistic development because he received much the same training in color mixing, modeling and other branches of art that the young apprentices did in the workshops of early Italian masters. In 1870 he entered the Royal Academy of Munich where the rapidity of his progress was regarded as phenomenal. Before he was twenty-four he had painted his now famous "Whistling Boy" and the beautiful portrait of Professor Loeffts that ranks him among the great portraitists of the world. Returning to this country, his work was pronounced too unfinished, too little in accord with the smooth, anecdotal paintings then in favor. Cincinnatians refused to buy his pictures or to concede him a place among the painters whom they honored. Discouraged by such a reception he was totally unprepared for the praise of the Boston critics and the ovation accorded his exhibition there in 1875. The vitality and naturalness of his work was greeted with enthusiasm by the younger artists, but it was a protest against the academic routine into which so many older painters had fallen and he received but scant courtesy from the Academicians of New York, who viewed him as a dangerous revolutionary.

Writing in *Scribner's* for May, 1880, W. C. Brownell describes the sensation produced in the Academy when his pictures and those by George Fuller, Ryder, Inness and Sargent were given places of honor. "The Academy was profoundly agitated. Certain popular painters felt that they had been treated not only with injustice and contumely but with absolute treachery by the hanging committee, of which the majority had studied in Munich and so gave precedence to work of mere students fresh from that famous but suspected metropolis of art, and relegated the paintings of the American Society to the limbo of the upper air. At a speedily

called meeting a resolution was passed that every Academician should henceforth have reserved for his work eight feet of space *on the line*." In justice to the members we must state that this extraordinary rule was shortly after rescinded, but it shows the hostility felt for these young painters who, today are acknowledged to be the founders of our national art. Before that time artists had sought their inspiration in works of foreign masters and their guidance in the Academic rules of the Schools. Now, like the celebrated "Men of 1830" in France, these young enthusiasts were turning back to nature, that unfailing source of everlasting truth from which the great artists of all ages have received their inspiration. Duveneck especially rebelled against the futility of formalism and his powerful interpretations of nature breathed a new spirit into an art occupied with smoothly finished paintings that feebly pictured life but failed to represent it.

Until the centennial exhibition Americans were content with the production of Roger's story-telling sculptures or the anecdotal paintings of New York Academicians and when Brownell declared, in the article referred to, that "there is no art which is artistically so debased as that whose *sole motive* is to tell a story," proclaiming Duveneck as one deserving of grateful recognition for his emphatic protest against the pernicious manner in which routine had entrenched itself in American art, he was violently assailed for his "vicious and petty criticism." "A writer who commiserates the state of American art when Church and Kensett represent it, has little claim to respect for his opinion."

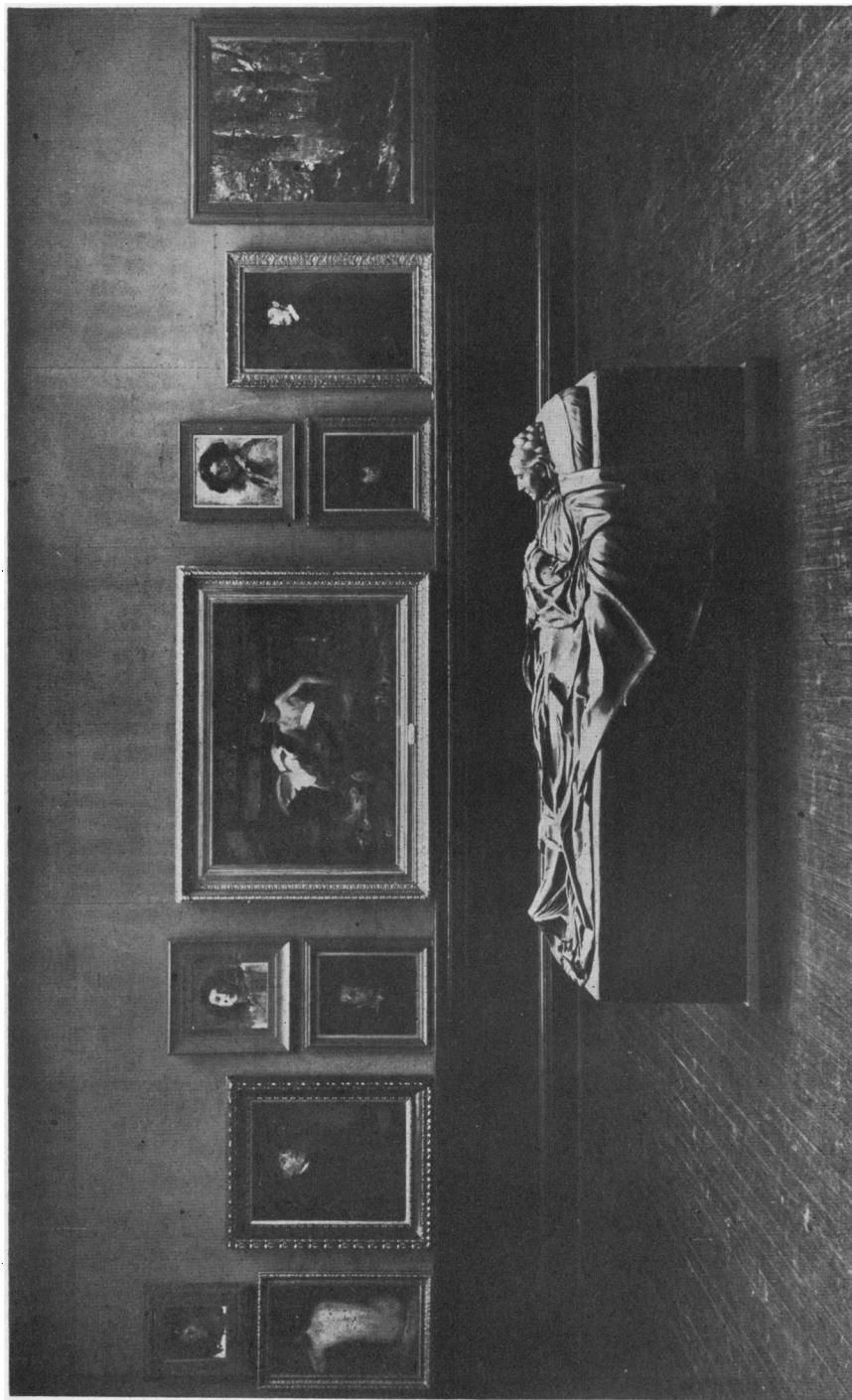
Today few are familiar with the works of these men while those of Duveneck are sought for by our best connoisseurs and Museum directors—and the Fine Arts Department of the Panama-Pacific Exposition has reserved an entire room for his pictures and statues, borrowed from the Cincinnati, New York, Philadelphia and Boston Museums. We have just learned that this collection has been awarded a *special medal* at the suggestion of the foreign judges who expressed their appreciation of Duveneck's work in the following petition:



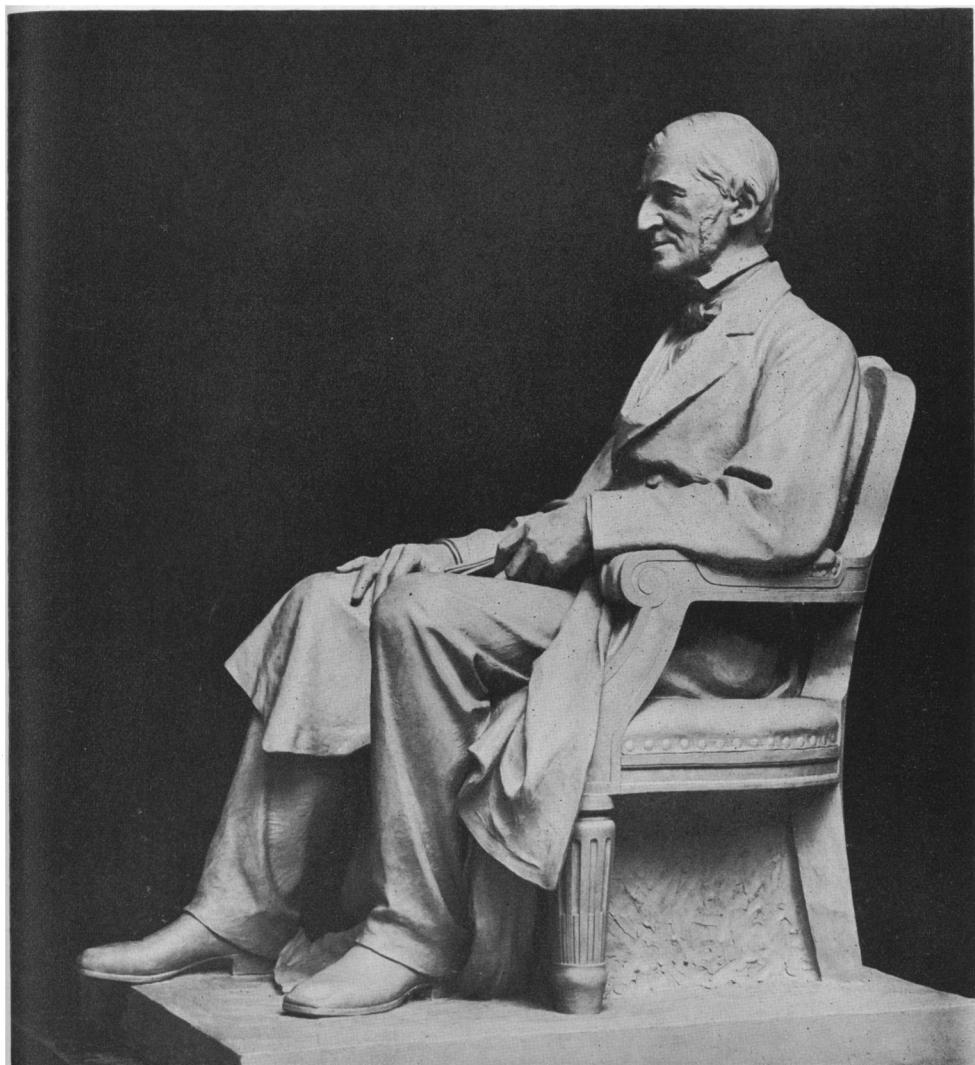
PORTRAIT OF PROFESSOR LOEFFTS

FRANK DUVENECK

THE CINCINNATI ART MUSEUM



GALLERY SHOWING PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURE BY FRANK DUVENECK



EMERSON

FRANK DUVENECK AND C. J. BARNHORN  
THE CINCINNATI ART MUSEUM

"We, the representatives of foreign countries acting upon the international jury of awards in the Department of Fine Arts, do hereby ask your kind consideration of the following recommendation unanimously adopted by us in a meeting specially called for this purpose.

"Whereas, the comprehensive retrospective collection of Frank Duveneck's works in oils, etchings and sculpture has astonished and delighted all those hitherto unacquainted with his life work, while

confirming the opinion of those few who have long held him in the highest esteem, both as an artist and as a man, we, the foreign jurors on the international jury of award, feel that some special recognition of his distinguished contributions to American art should be awarded Frank Duveneck, and we herewith recommend that a special medal of honor be struck in his honor and awarded him."

Most of the works in this exhibit were executed before Mr. Duveneck became



FLORENTINE FLOWER GIRL

FRANK DUVENECK

THE CINCINNATI ART MUSEUM

connected as a teacher with the Cincinnati Art School where, for nearly thirty years, his classes have been the goal of all aspiring young painters. His power to develop their highest capabilities, his sympathetic understanding of their difficulties, his simplicity and friendliness obtain for him the absolute devotion of these pupils. They have an almost reverential adoration for this man whose greatness even the humblest unconsciously recognize. Nor is the devotion all on their side; the pupils of Mr. Duveneck are his friends, he takes an immense interest in their development and is eager for their success. More and more has he permitted himself to become absorbed by these young people whose lives are enriched by intimate contact with a man of such broad, generous nature. Only one devoted to the highest ideals could be so self-sacrificing, for teaching necessarily interferes with creative work and had this artist sought wealth or fame alone he would long ago have resigned his position of master in the Cincinnati School.

For some years Duveneck has refused to sell any of his work, notwithstanding the large prices offered him. He has recently bequeathed his entire collection to the Museum with which he has been so long associated. There his pupils can continue to study his technical methods when he is no longer able to teach them. This princely gift has been accepted with great enthusiasm and at the close of the San Francisco Exposition all the pictures and statues in his possession will be formally installed in the spacious rooms reserved for them by the Museum director. They will include a replica of the sculptured monument in Florence, an exquisite full length recumbent figure modeled in memory of the young wife who died in 1887, as well as the portrait of Emerson which was executed in conjunction with his life-long friend, the talented sculptor Clement Barnhorn, in whose adjoining studios he spends all his leisure hours. Among the paintings given are a number of those marvellously handled early portraits that won for him the title of "the painter's painter" and continue to influence the technique of the younger generation. Writing of his work the well-known artist, L. H. Meakin, says that he is

"essentially a painter in the sense that distinguished Franz Hals, Rembrandt and Velasquez from Raphael, Holbein or Dürer. The first three made paintings in the most complete meaning of the word, where as the works of the others, noble and unequalled as they are of their kind, are really not paintings but very wonderful colored drawings. Duveneck's works are emphatically made with paint and the paint brush, not drawn and then colored. It is the expressive use of the paint itself that is a large factor in the artistic value of his work."

But Mr. Duveneck is not only a great painter; he is a true artist in whatever medium he employs to express his thoughts and emotions. The thoroughness of his early training has enabled him to work in marble whenever that material has served his purpose better than paint, or with the etcher's needle when he did not wish to use either oil or water color. His etchings of Venice deserve to rank with those of Whistler for their beauty and strength of drawing and delightful arrangement of shadow.

Until quite recently no one thought of him as a mural painter, now he stands among the first in America. Desiring to erect a monument in memory of his beloved mother, he felt that the decoration of a chapel in the newly erected Gothic Cathedral at her old home, Covington, Ky., would be more in accordance with her wishes than an expensive tombstone in an unfrequented cemetery, and to his profound reverence for her religious beliefs the world owes a magnificent series of paintings wherein he has proved himself a master of mural decoration. But admirable as is the handling and combination of color, the spacing and arrangement of his figures, one loses sight of all this in the noble and original conception which reveals him as a great creative artist. Studying this work I am haunted by the words of one of our best critics: "There is no art so elevated as that which, to the end of producing a profound impression, illustrates a lofty idea." The old, old story of man's redemption is here told in poignant language; the story is old but it is revealed to us through the vision of a great modern artist. No written works

and no reproductions can do justice to such a masterpiece. As Wagner's music should be heard and not described, so these superb religious paintings must be seen in order to be appreciated.

In these days of artistic cataclysm when the whirlwind of modernity threatens to destroy those Elysian fields of the imagination, wherein the spirit of man has found rest and tranquility throughout the ages, we turn with gratitude to the

sane teachings and beautiful work of one who believes in and follows the traditions of past art; who, while using every new note in the scale of color and eagerly grasping every recent discovery for the perfection of his technique, yet holds fast to the good old teachings that man can not improve on the works of God and that the profound study and comprehension of nature's laws are the foundation of all true art.

## MURAL PAINTINGS FOR A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

THE art department of the New York City High Schools has made serious efforts through the last few years to interest a number of organizations in the decoration of city High Schools with mural paintings. The Municipal Art Society has lent its aid to the decoration of the Washington Irving High School and the Beaux Arts Society of Architects to the development of a competition for paintings for the foyer of the De Witt Clinton High School.

In addition to these the Mural Painters' Society has, through Mr. William Laurel Harris, its one-time president, assisted the general organization of the Eastern District High School, Brooklyn, in securing three large panels which have recently been installed on the entrance stairway of the school. These panels are the work of Mr. Frederick Lincoln Stoddard, of New York City, who is well-known for his mural paintings in the City Hall of St. Louis, his stained glass window in St. Michael's Church, in New York, a number of mural panels in the St. Louis High Schools, and a large lunette in the large Hebrew Technical School for Girls in New York City.

Mr. Stoddard was originally a designer of stained glass, but went abroad to study in Paris in 1891. There he took up mural work and returned to his native city in 1896. After executing a number of commissions in the Middle West, he came to New York City in 1904, having completed at that time some twenty mural decorations in different churches and public halls. He

was a silver medalist in the exposition of 1904, in St. Louis, and has since executed a number of commissions in the East, particularly "The Soul of a Rose," now owned by Mrs. Arthur James.

The three panels painted by Mr. Stoddard for the Eastern District High School, are each about eight feet wide and twelve feet in height. They represent the "Birth and Development of Education," the left panel showing the "Gift of Fire" to man, with Prometheus bound upon a rock in the background and man reaching forward toward enlightenment, which is symbolically represented by the flame, while the animal world is typified by a snarling tiger shrinking from the blaze.

The central panel, recently shown in New York City in the Exhibition of Civic Art arranged by the Municipal Art Society, shows the "Dawn of Civilization" with Truth holding aloft a torch, and in the foreground, man at work upon the first piece of pottery, while the family help to subdue Brute Force which is here symbolically represented by a recumbent lion wreathed in flower chains which a child is drawing round it.

The right-hand panel shows the "Birth of the Alphabet," the earliest student scratching with a broken spear the first letters upon a rock. Behind him warriors sneeringly look upon the first steps of learning, while in the foreground a serpent shrinks from the light of education which blazes before the writer.